

Message Text

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47

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9792

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE HONG KONG 2321

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJ: OPERA SAVAGELY ATTACKED

SUMMARY. STRUGGLE SHARPENS ON THE CULTURAL SCENE. AN OPERA PERFORMED AT THE RECENT THEATRICAL FESTIVAL IN PEKING HAS BEEN SAVAGELY ATTACKED IN PEOPLE'S DAILY AS AN ATTEMPT TO REVERSE THE VERDICT ON LIU SHAO-CHI AND LIN PIAO. END SUMMARY.

1. AMID SIGNS ELSEWHERE THAT THE PRC'S INTERNAL POLITICAL MOVEMENT IS BEING REINED IN (HONG KONG 2304; HONG KONG 2318), THE STRUGGLE IN THE CULTURAL AREA IS TURNING INCREASINGLY SHARP. PEOPLE'S DAILY FEBRUARY 28 CARRIED AN ATTACK ON A SHANSI OPERA THAT RIVALS THE NASTINESS OF LITERARY CRITICISM IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION ERA. INDEED, THE ARTICLE CHARGES THAT THE OPERA IN QUESTION IS A SCARCELY VEILED REWRITE OF A WORK THAT WAS ORIGINALLY BOMBED IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

2. THE AUTHOR OF THE ATTACK IS CHU LAN, A BYLINE WE NOTED EARLIER
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IN SHARPLY WORDED CRITICISM OF WESTERN MUSIC (HONG KONG 1609). THE SUBJECT IS AN OPERA ENTITLED "THREE VISITS TO TAOFENG," WHICH WAS PERFORMED AT THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED NORTH CHINA THEATRICAL FESTIVAL IN PEKING, SPONSORED BY THE CULTURAL GROUP UNDER THE

STATE COUNCIL. THE OPERA IS CHARGED WITH BEING A LITTLE CHANGED RESTAGING OF "THREE VISITS TO TAN YUAN," AN OPERA CONNECTED IN THE PAST WITH LIU SHAO-CHI'S WIFE, WANG KUANG-MEI. THE ARTICLE REPEATEDLY DENOUNCES THE OPERA AS A "BIG POISONOUS WEEK," AND RAKES UP ITS PAST HISTORY IN METICULOUS DETAIL.

3. "THERE IS IRONCLAD PROOF," THE ARTICLE CHARGES, THE THE NEW VERSION OF THE OPERA "HAS BEEN CAREFULLY WRITTEN BY SOME PEOPLE AND APPROVED AND SUPPORTED BY OTHERS." IT IS AN ATTEMPT "TO REVERSE THE DECISION ON LIU SHAO-CHI." ELSEWHERE THE ARTICLE ALSO CHARGES THAT THE OPERA IS AN ATTEMPT TO REVERSE THE VERDICT ON LIN PIAO. ONE FEATURE OF THE OPERA THAT IS ATTACKED IS A FEMALE CHARACTER NAMED CHING LAN, AND THE ARTICLE STRONGLY SUGGESTS THAT THIS CHARACTER IS BEING TAKEN AS IN SOME WAY A PORTRAYAL OF CHIANG CHING ("NAMING HER CHING LAN--A NAME MEANING GREEN WHICH DERIVES FROM BLUE BUT SURPASSES BLUE IN BEAUTY. THEIR PURPOSE IS TO FORCE PEOPLE TO LEARN FROM CHING LAN AND TO BE FAITHFUL SUPPORTERS OF THE DOCTRINES OF CONFUCIUS....")

4. COMMENT. WE CANNOT TELL FOR CERTAIN FROM THE CONTEXT WHETHER THIS IS AN ATTACK ON CHIANG CHING, OR AN ATTACK BY HER, WE ARE INCLINED TOWARD THE LATTER AS A GUESS AT THIS POINT. TWO OTHER POLITBURO MEMBERS--CHOU EN-LAI AS HEAD OF THE STATE COUNCIL AND WU TEH AS HEAD OF THE CULTURAL GROUP, COULD BE IMPLICATED AS THE OPERA WAS STAGED AT A FESTIVAL UNDER THEIR AEGIS. MORE IMMEDIATELY, BUT PROBABLY SUPERFICIALLY, THE ATTACK FALLS ON THE CREATIVE GROUP OF THE SHANSI PROVINCIAL CULTURAL BUREAU WHICH THE ARTICLE FINGERS AS HAVING WRITTEN THE OPERA. SHANSI IS THE HOME PROVINCE OF CHEN YUNG-KUEI, THE POLITBURO'S TRAVELING APOSTLE OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY. THERE IS SOME SLIGHT REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HE COULD BE CONNECTED WITH THE ATTACK. WE NOTE THAT THE OPERA IN ITS EARLIER VERSION IS CRITICIZED AS AN EFFORT TO "COUNTER TACHAI," THE AGRICULTURAL MODEL CHEN HEADS.
ALLEN

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